

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

105th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 79

May 22, 1997, 11:00 am
Page S- 4938 Temp. Record

BUDGET RESOLUTION/Nationalizing Public School Construction

SUBJECT: Senate Concurrent Budget Resolution for fiscal years 1998-2002 . . . S.Con. Res. 27. Domenici motion to table the Moseley-Braun amendment No. 336.

ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 56-43

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. Con Res. 27, the Concurrent Budget Resolution for fiscal year 1998, will balance the Federal budget in fiscal year (FY) 2002 by slowing the overall rate of growth in spending over the next 5 years to below the rate of growth in revenue collections (the Congressional Budget Office recently revised upwards its 5-year revenue estimate by \$225 billion).

The Moseley-Braun amendment would increase taxes and spending by \$5 billion with the stated purpose of creating a new Federal program to build, repair, and renovate public schools. The Federal Government currently has 788 separate education programs on which it spends \$96.9 billion annually.

Debate on a first-degree amendment to a budget resolution is limited to 2 hours. Debate on the Moseley-Braun amendment was further limited by unanimous consent. Following debate, Senator Domenici moved to table the amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

Those favoring the motion to table contended:

The Moseley-Braun amendment would throw \$5 billion of money the Federal Government does not have at a \$112 billion State and local government problem. K-12 education has always been primarily a local responsibility, with some State assistance. The Federal Government has been involved in only a few specialized areas of education, such as special education for disabled students and job training. Still, that fact has not stopped it from reinventing the wheel, over and over again. For each of the areas in which it is involved, it has multiple, and even hundreds, of duplicative programs. Each year the Federal Government spends \$98 billion

(See other side)

YEAS (56)			NAYS (43)			NOT VOTING (1)	
Republicans (52 or 95%)		Democrats (4 or 9%)	Republicans (3 or 5%)	Democrats (40 or 91%)		Republicans (0)	Democrats (1)
Abraham	Hutchinson	Breaux	Campbell	Akaka	Kennedy		Harkin- ^{2AN}
Allard	Hutchison	Cleland	D'Amato	Baucus	Kerrey		
Ashcroft	Inhofe	Ford	Specter	Biden	Kerry		
Bennett	Jeffords	Lieberman		Bingaman	Kohl		
Bond	Kempthorne			Boxer	Landrieu		
Brownback	Kyl			Bryan	Lautenberg		
Burns	Lott			Bumpers	Leahy		
Chafee	Lugar			Byrd	Levin		
Coats	Mack			Conrad	Mikulski		
Cochran	McCain			Daschle	Moseley-Braun		
Collins	McConnell			Dodd	Moynihan		
Coverdell	Murkowski			Dorgan	Murray		
Craig	Nickles			Durbin	Reed		
DeWine	Roberts			Feingold	Reid		
Domenici	Roth			Feinstein	Robb		
Enzi	Santorum			Glenn	Rockefeller		
Faircloth	Sessions			Graham	Sarbanes		
Frist	Shelby			Hollings	Torricelli		
Gorton	Smith, Bob			Inouye	Wellstone		
Gramm	Smith, Gordon			Johnson	Wyden		
Grams	Snowe						
Grassley	Stevens						
Gregg	Thomas						
Hagel	Thompson						
Hatch	Thurmond						
Helms	Warner						

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

1—Official Business
2—Necessarily Absent
3—Illness
4—Other

SYMBOLS:

AY—Announced Yea
AN—Announced Nay
PY—Paired Yea
PN—Paired Nay

on some 788 educational programs. Despite all of its efforts, it is still falling short in the responsibilities it has assumed, most notably in special education. When Congress first passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, it promised it would put up 40 percent of the money, but it currently gives only 7 percent. Instead of making new promises and building new Federal bureaucracies, as suggested by this amendment, it would make much more sense to consolidate and improve existing programs.

Another major problem with the amendment is that the Federal Government does not have the money to spend. The only time in history that the Federal Government has given aid to build public schools was during the Great Depression, when people and States were broke. (In 1994 Congress created a new public school program and provided \$100 million, but President Clinton rescinded every penny of that amount, saying that "the construction and renovation of school facilities has traditionally been the responsibility of State and local governments financed primarily by local taxpayers. We are opposed to the creation of a new Federal grant program for school construction.") Today, the Federal Government is deeply in debt and running yearly deficits, the States are financially sound, and the economy is growing. Schools in many districts have fallen into disrepair; in most districts they have not. Given these facts, whom do our colleagues think should be responsible for fixing those public schools in America that have been allowed to deteriorate by some State and local governments?

We honestly cannot tell by their amendment, because even though it provides Federal money, it is only a token amount. It may get Senators nice headlines, and they may get to go back to their districts and cut ribbons at particular schools for which they manage to win funding, but it will barely start to pay for the amount of work that needs to be done. It will not even pay for half of the \$13 billion that is needed in Illinois alone. Will those States that have been the most negligent in fixing up their schools be rewarded by getting the largest share of this \$5 billion? Will Federal strings be attached? Will school construction costs end up higher with Federal aid because they will have to follow Davis-Bacon construction mandates? The answer to all of these questions, we fear, is "yes." It is a \$112 billion State and local government problem, and our colleagues want to spend \$1 billion a year in Federal funds on it. If they succeed, they will make the problem worse.

The Federal Government has enough responsibilities it is failing to meet already, including in education, without assuming one more responsibility it cannot handle. Our colleagues' intentions may be good, but the results of their amendment would be disastrous for public schools. We therefore urge our colleagues to support the motion to table.

Those opposing the motion to table contended:

The Moseley-Braun amendment would order the Finance Committee to come up with an extra \$5 billion in revenues, and would give that money to the Labor Committee to spend on the country's most urgent public school repair, renovation, modernization, and construction needs. This money would allow the Federal Government to create a partnership among the national, State, and local governments to repair our crumbling schools and to prepare our children for the 21st century. The amendment does not endorse any particular plan. Those details can be worked out later. Instead, the amendment endorses the principle that it is time for the Federal Government to get involved, and gives Senators a chance to go on record as supporting this new effort.

The United States General Accounting Office (GAO), at our request, completed an exhaustive study of the condition of America's public schools. It found that 14 million children every day attend schools that are in such poor condition that major renovation or outright replacement is needed, and it found that the problem is widespread; 38 percent of urban schools, 30 percent of rural schools, and 29 percent of suburban schools are falling down around our children. In Illinois alone it will cost \$13 billion to make needed repairs. The schools in the worst shape are usually in lower-income neighborhoods. The reason is not because the people in those communities do not care; instead, it is due to the way that schools are financed in America, which is by the property tax. Lower-income communities usually have higher property taxes than richer neighborhoods, but they collect less money because the property is worth much less. Schools are a very high priority for lower-income people, but they are forced to pay for their own schools and they just do not have enough money to build good schools. They need help.

When we invest in transportation, we understand that it is a national issue. We do not build great roads through rich neighborhoods, passable roads in middle-class neighborhoods, and terrible roads in poor neighborhoods. Doing so would play havoc with commerce. We should look at education in the same way. If we build all of our children's futures by investing in all of their educations, we can bring every American community into the 21st century, instead of leaving some in isolated pockets of failure. We urge Senators to invest in the futures of America's children. We urge them to support the Moseley-Braun amendment.